# CHALKTALK - FEBRUARY 2025

## RWTO/OERO London-Middlesex Branch Newsletter

Editor: Janice Thielenhaus

**Bookmark our branch website** https://rwto.org/branch/london-middlesex



A message from branch president **Linda Freeman**

We continue to grow our membership into 220 members including 15 lifetime members. The provincial directive to include other retired women educators into RWTO/OERO including Early Childhood Educators and Educational Assistants was supported and passed in the June 2024 virtual convention. Smaller branches especially, will benefit from other members joining as younger, newly retired educators are needed to help with leadership positions and to offer fresh ideas.

Locally, our move to the Best Western Lamplighter last spring was successful for our March, April and May luncheons and programs. We returned to a freshly renovated RiverBend Clubhouse and hosted lunch in September with two speakers – Terry Kennedy – independent insurance broker for RWTO explaining the Manulife Open Window – and Karen MacDonald for Wills, Power of Attorney and Trusts. In October we had a presentation about Karen's Place and in November our provincial president, Jan Murdoch gave a compelling talk on how to stay "brain healthy", followed by our choir singing festive songs led by Tracey McIntyre and Johanna Hurd.

The outreach collections each month exceeded our expectations – The London Food Bank, the Education Fund and the Kiwanis Award for public speaking recipients, the Women's Rural Resource Centre, Strathroy and Area, Karen's Place, A Book for Every Child – our members were so generous. Thank you so much!

I appreciate the executive members and their respective committees for their time and energy in offering activities for all members to enjoy. Thank you for your stewardship.

We will host a Fashion Show in March with Fabulous Finds by Natalie (Facebook). Two police officers will speak to our group regarding fraud and seniors' scams in April. In May, we will enjoy a special banquet and choir performance. The executive will be reaffirmed and there will be a memoriam ceremony for members who have passed since May 2024. Helen Bobyk and Michele Specht joined our executive in September and have been welcoming new members at RiverBend's doors, making them feel at home at the table for newcomers. Your dedication and efforts are appreciated by all of us. Thank you to Janice Thielenhaus for the layout and printing the August Program and our annual newsletter, *Chalktalk*. They take many hours to complete but are a great resource for our members and we value that.

I will continue to send out email blasts to keep you apprised of upcoming events and friendship activities. Feel free to ask a question or make a suggestion to our executive.

Yours in caring and sharing,

*Linda Freeman*

**Spring Luncheon Dates**



**Thursday, March 27, 2025 Thursday, April 24, 2025 Thursday, May 22, 2025**

**Please remember your Name Tag, Rewards Card, and books for the Book Table**

## DID YOU KNOW?

***A lot of work takes place behind the scenes: These are some of the things that are done for YOU!***

**Annually:-**

Each Spring Sandra McKeen and Hilary Charles who are responsible for Luncheons, and other executive members meet with the chef at RiverBend to discuss the menu for each luncheon and negotiate costs of the meal and facility rental.

In May/June the executive plan the program for the following year, confirm speakers/topics before the Program is printed and distributed to members.

**For six Luncheons:-**

Each month the executive meet to plan the upcoming luncheon, review the previous month's luncheon and address any concerns arising.

At each luncheon, the President puts the name of each member who is attending in a **draw for a gift bag** as a "thank you" for attending the luncheon.

The members who bring a new person to join our Branch are put in a **draw held in May**, for a **year's free membership**, as a thank you, for introducing a new member.

Each member attending a luncheon gets a stamp on a **Rewards Card**. Stamps are also given for each *additional* participation a member has, such as organizing the book exchange table, being in the choir, providing the table decorations, etc. Each time a Rewards Card is full the card is put in a **draw for a gift bag** twice a year, in November and May.

At each luncheon there are **two greeters** welcoming members and guests to the luncheon. **New members** are taken to a luncheon table that is set aside for them, to feel welcomed and included in our branch.

The "**Share the Wealth**" 50/25/25 draw gives two members each 25% of the cash while 50% helps pay for incidental costs of the luncheon. Incidental costs include an honorarium of $125 to our speaker, the cost of their lunch, and room rental which is not calculated as part of the luncheon cost.

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We express our motto of **Caring & Sharing** through our Courtesy/Goodwill person, Sharon Riley who sends out **cards of sympathy** when a member is bereaved, Sharon Lunau mails out **birthday cards** to members who have a "significant birthday" such as turning 70,75,80 etc. Debby Albin organizes **personal visits** to members who are "shut-ins".

**Holiday cards**, signed by an executive member are mailed out to our members who are 80+ years of age. A **gift bag and card** are delivered to members who are 90+ years of age and live in, or very near to London.

This year each member is asked to complete an **Information sheet,** primarily to ensure we don't lose track of any member who moved and may be unable to provide our executive with a new address. Sandy O'Brien and Sharon Lunau are keeping track of these Information sheets.

*Janice Thielenhaus*

## 19 New Members joined in 2024

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| Joyce Speake | Christina Punter |
| Judy Harrigan | Deborah Wrack |
| Vallerye May | Carol MacMillan |
| Shirley MacMillan | Nancy Springer |
| Connie Sargant | Linda Ross |
| Susan Jensen | Lyn Hill |
| Gloria Hales | Judy Carradus |
| Lynne Whitmore | Kim Tereschuk |
| Ilene Bamford | Karen Ersman |
| Jill Gilmore | Phyllis Leighton (Associate) |



Linda Freeman is pictured with some of our new members.

*Karen Tierney*

## Helping Homeless Women

In October, Mona Wuytenburg spoke about the help that **Karen's Place** was giving to women who were over the age of 50 and homeless in London. The house in the centre of London, near support services and bus routes, was donated by Karen's family and opened in the summer of 2023. A number of businesses have donated time and products for furnishing and stocking the house. There are individual rooms for 8 women with communal space for preparing and eating meals together when desired, doing laundry etc. The women may stay up to 2 years with appropriate support before going to a place of their own. Mona and her team of volunteers, led by Jackie Arts provide a variety of programs to meet the women's needs in learning to live independently again. They are constantly liaising with similar groups in London to share ideas on support programs. Our Outreach in October went to Karen's Place and along with paper goods we raised $1120 donation for the Transition House – Karen's Place.

Mona Wuytenburg,
Director of Karen's Place



## London-Middlesex Executive 2024-25



## Friendship Activities in 2025

**Breakfast Socials**: **Shelley's Restaurant**, the Lamplighter Inn, Best Western, 591 Wellington Rd., South. 9:30 am:

Wed. Feb.12, Mon. Mar. 10, Tues. Apr. 8,
Wed. May 14, Mon. Jun. 9, Tues. Jul. 8,
Wed. Aug 13, Mon. Sep.8

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**Huron Country Playhouse -** Debby Albin
***Jesus Christ Superstar*** - Friday, June 13
***Evita*** - Friday, July 11

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**Summer Theatre - dates/places TBA**

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**Mini-Golf & Lunch - Friday, September 5th**

## The Hiking/Walking Group

A few years ago, this group was thriving. Numbers were high and walks took place all over London and environs. However, since last Spring, it has been inactive. The leaders tried various strategies to bring members out, but they were not successful. This can happen for many reasons … and the leaders are pleased that at the time, we were able to enjoy the many walks and lunches with those hikers!
London is a vibrant and nature-filled city from the Thames River to Boler Mountain. There are paths, parks, sidewalks and trails throughout the city – easy to reach and travel on. We encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity. All local London libraries have well-marked maps of our area. Just ask!

Healthy, Happy, Hiking to all.
*Maureen G., Cathy H., Jackie K.*

## Wednesday Book Club

***The Briar Club*** by Kate Quinn. This enjoyable read is not the author's usual WWII well-researched historical fiction. The story evolved from a footnote in the research from Kate's husband. This is a haunting powerful historical fiction thriller about the 1950's McCarthy era. The character study of female friendships and secrets in Washington DC is quite absorbing. You won't be able to put it down!
***The Hidden Storyteller*** by Mandy Robotham. This author is one of our favourite historical fiction writers. We appreciated the way the author portrayed the perspective views of all of the different characters in this new book. We were humbly saturated with the views of the innocent Germans after the war with Britain and the Allies, alongside the hidden guilty criminals. There is also a murder to be solved; perhaps you will solve it before the murderer is identified? Either way, the book will delve into all of your emotions.

*Debbie Albin*

## Thursday Book Club

Linda Castillo is the award winning author of a thrilling crime novel, ***Outsider*** set in winter in an American Amish farming community. She weaves a compelling story centered on two women, old friends and both in law enforcement, who shelter with an Amish family as they attempt to solve the crime of fraud. The men they hunt are police as well – gone rogue and desperate.
Our discussion focused on the skills of the author to create such an authentic setting – a blizzard blinding the trek across fields and forest – emphasizing the fear, isolation danger and loneliness of the women.
Chosen for reading/discussion by Gwen King

***The Thursday Murder Club*** by Richard Osman was chosen by Maureen Graham.
A group of seniors come together as they take up residence in a newly built Seniors' Complex in rural England. Quickly bored with what appears to be changes in their lifestyles, they form a group – naming themselves, "The Thursday Murder Club", Elizabeth, a former investigator and accepted leader of the four has files of unsolved "cold cases" which become the key to the adventures that follow.
Richard Osman has now written five lively, heart-warming, humorous, intriguing books in this series. Our group all agreed that he knows and understands the older but mature and flexible mind. For a romp, a twisted plot and deep chuckles – this series is highly recommended.
*Cathy Harrison*

## Table Decorations

By the talented, creative team who make the themed centre pieces for our luncheon tables, led by Irene Gauvin they are Sue Scruton, Helen Munce, Cathy Harrison, Marg Williamson, Gayle Murray, Joy Morrison, Roseanne Wadsworth and Marg Delagran.








Many thanks to Bernarda Norwood for all the photos in the newsletter and in the News on the RWTO London-Middlesex website.

## A Reminder

To send changes of mailing address/ email/ phone to Membership Chair, Karen Tierney at tierneykaren288@gmail.com or to Treasurer Jane Williams at janeandowen@sympatico.ca or to Sharon Lunau at sal_032949@hotmail.com

## RWTO Supplementary Health Insurance

Our RWTO Hospital and Home Care insurance plan from **Manulife** for the continuing low price of **$14.49 per month,** is an **additional coverage** to your other health insurance plan. Members must continue their membership with RWTO in order to stay with the Manulife plan. In September 2024, Terry Kennedy, the independent broker for RWTO insurance, spoke at the luncheon about all the benefits of the plan, as well as reminding members that September to December 2024 was an Open entry to the plan for RWTO members who were past their first year of retirement. This meant they could join the plan without completing the medical section of the application.

Members who are in their first year of retirement do not have to complete the medical section on the application.

Contact Helen Munce at 519-473-2050 if you would like a **brochure with an application form.**

When a plan member has a need for nursing services at home, as a result of injury or illness, they must now send Manulife a PRIOR AUTHORIZATION FORM signed by a physician or nurse practitioner. If the need is urgent or immediate, contact the Manulife Call Centre at 1-877-222-7340 for verbal authorization.

Go to **rwto.org/membership/insurance plans** to obtain the forms or you can phone the call centre and have the forms mailed to you.

**Remember to inform Manulife if you have a change of address** as well as inform our Membership Chair Karen Tierney 519-473-0290.

*Helen Munce,* Insurance

## November Entertainment

Tracey McIntyre leads the choir with Johanna Hurd on piano.





## In Memoriam

It saddens us to announce we have lost these wonderful women during the past year. We have been privileged to have known them and extend our condolences to their families, friends and colleagues.



In May, these flowers were placed in the vase during the Memoriam ceremony for the members who had passed.

Kelli Rundle in March 2024
Julia McNaughton in March 2024
Patricia Haggith in May 2024
Marian Clark in June 2024
Margaret de Ryk-Tavani in December 2024

*Karen Tierney*, Membership

## Shining Star Award 2024

Last May, co-presidents Mary Maxwell and Linda Freeman, along with Pat Savage presented the Shining Star Award to **Joan Taylor**.



## Remembrance Day 2024

In November, the President is invited to lay a wreath on the Cenotaph in Victoria Park the day before the Remembrance Day ceremony, along with other Service Groups in the community.





## Recommended Good Books

***While Justice Sleeps*** - by **Stacey Abrams** is a gripping, complex-plotted thriller set within the halls of the U.S. Supreme Court where a young law clerk finds herself embroiled in a shocking mystery, crafted by a renowned and prominent U.S. judge. Jane Williams

***Recipe for a Good Life*** – fiction by **Lesley Crewe** – a writer is sent on retreat to a Cape Breton shack to find her best-selling muse again. The story is heart-warming, humorous and intriguing. Janice Thielenhaus

***The Road Years*** – by **Rick Mercer** will have you chuckling to laughing out loud! The most recent of his books, Rick chronicles his wacky and interesting coast-to-coast adventures while filming *The Rick Mercer Report* and provides insight into many well-known Canadians from politicians to musicians. Dianne Heatherington

***The Phoenix Crown*** by **Kate Quinn** with **Janie Chang** – it is historical fiction set in 1906 San Francisco, around the time of the earthquake. This is a story of strong women overcoming natural and human obstacles. Sandy O Brien

***Lessons in Chemistry*** by **Bonnie Garmus** is a very amusing story about a female scientist in the '50s, when women were side-lined by their male colleagues. She puts her scientific knowledge to work in a cooking show that becomes immensely popular with housewives and the U.S. nation's home cooking improves immeasurably. Linda Freeman

***The Maid*** by **Nita Prose** is an unusual mystery story about Molly, a neuro-divergent maid in a very reputable English hotel, when circumstances conspire and lead to her being accused of theft and murder. Janice Thielenhaus

***It Ends With Us*** by **Colleen Hoover** and is followed by ***It Starts With Us*** – two excellent novels about relationships. Sandy O'Brien